DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 145 004 UD 017 271

AUTHOR Cavin, Alonzo; And Others
TITLE Affective Variables Indicating Success for Compensatory Education Projects.
PUB DATE 22 Jul 76
NOTE 22p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Affective Objectives; *Attitude Tests; Cognitive Objectives; *College Students; *Compensatory Education Programs; Higher Education; Interaction; *Prediction; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This document is a study of the importance of affective variables and the implications of these variables in student success or failure. A 28 item questionnaire was administered to 30 college students enrolled in a compensatory education program. The questionnaire assessed attitudes toward professors, administrators, peers, toward relevance of school, and toward program services. Results indicated a relationship between attitudes toward school and performance. Namely, those groups of students showing negative attitudes were those who cut classes, avoided administrators and who did not use the services offered by the school. These very tentative findings are important to compensatory education programs. These programs select students from disadvantaged backgrounds who show high potential for academic success. The difficulty lies in identifying these students. Standard instruments are culturally biased and are of little use in predicting academic performance. The literature has reported on four ways to resolve the issue of students recruitment: social Darwinism, middle class-ification, institutional change, and new admissions criteria. The inclusion of performance on certain attitudinal scales as one measure of future success is endorsed in this paper. These scales are described briefly. (Author/AM)

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AFFECTIVE VARIABLES INDICATING ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROJECTS

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Submitted by Alonzo Cavin, Director, Project Prepare
Widener College
Chester, Pennsylvania 19013

UD017271

July 22, 1976

ABSTRACT OF STUDY

Today there is much talk about the failure of compensatory education programs. These programs that attempt to compensate the "bright, but academic underachiever" have many names and varied academic levels. But whatever the name--Upward Bound, Educational Opportunity Program, Special Services to Disadvantaged Students--the present research indicates that, for the most part, these programs have failed.

An examination of most of such programs, reveals that these programs tend to channel their programs solely toward the cognitive domain. This is done in spite of the typical program student's recent failure in such a learning set, and the ever growing bulk of research that tends to show that the affective domain is at least as important as the cognitive, and perhaps even more so, in the student's success or failure in academia.

The present study attempts to demonstrate (a) the importance of affective variables in students (b) implications of these variables in student success or failure and (c) tentative suggestions for identification and use of certain affective variables in education.

With the advent of the publishing of the Coleman Report (1966) there has begun a trickle of studies that indicate the failure of educational opportunity programs. These studies are based upon projects that all pretty much operate on the same premise: If the educationally disadvantaged student is compensated by being supplied with enough services, he will then survive the rigors of higher education. Thus they all set about the busines of supplying the student with services that would upgrade his cognitive skills, i.e. Note taking, How to Study, etc.; and most have met with the same results--failure.

Pearlman (1972) blasted his institution for its lack of "commitment to the project," "inherent racism of the faculty" and unconcern about meeting the "needs of the student." Jackson (1973) quite frankly calls the entire field of compensatory education a "myth and a tragedy" since all students need the same kind of rigorous education. Kirp (1973) virtually makes the same claim as Jackson calling all such programs "illusions of equality." Elkind (1972) agrees with those cited above in that there is something basically wrong with the institution of school when it comes to dealing with the educationally disadvantaged youth. These young people are usually Black and the teachers are White. This sets up what he sees as institutional problems: (a) White teachers are generally unprepared for dealing with young Blacks, (b) White teachers bear educational and racial prejudices and (c) There is

a notable lack of Black male teachers for models for young Black students. Pesillo (1972) indicts the institutions of higher education for all the above reasons, particularly for their lack of "firm commitment."

Others who attack compensatory education programs take a different apprcach. Instead of indicting the institution of education, they claim that the educationally disadvantaged student is not a problem created by education, but by the greater society outside of education. Jencks (1972) dismisses all compensatory education programs and concludes that these "educational problems are not educational problems but societal problems," and that what we need is Socialism to correct these ills. Yette (1972) cautions Blacks to stay away from such projects calling them "genocide" since their aim is to make "Blacks become White." Klingelhofer and Longacre (1972) state that such projects are unworkable for most of the poor because they will only work for those with "middle class attitudes or those who aspire to those attitudes."

Whatever the source of the problem, institutional or societal, most of the literature indicates that the projects aren't working. The author feels that the high attrition rate and generally poor academic performance of the students occur because the projects are all targeted toward the cognitive domain. This seems to be the wrong approach: the typical project student comes to the project after exposure to 12 years of the cognitive domain and failed. Why then after a few short weeks of graduation from high

school should more exposure to the cognitive domain make him a good student!

Of course most projects on college campuses at their inception used the same arguments to indict the nation's secondary schools that they are now using to indict the schools of higher education; i.e., failure to meet the needs of the students, lack of commitment, etc. This concentration on the cognitive area alone is not working. The evidence seems to be quite clear the tutoring, counseling and other educational strategies designed to improve the students's cognitive skills have been failures.

The above seems to strongly suggest that another domain should be explored. S. B. Kahn, "Affective Correlates of Academic Achievement," Journal of Educational Psychology, 60, 3, 1969, attempted to "assess the contribution of the affective variables to the accuracy of prediction over that which is realized by intellective variables alone." Kahn, like McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell (1953), indicates that "achievement-oriented 'psychological' variables influence academic achievement significantly more than variables involving mechanics of 'how to study'."

ANALYSIS OF STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

A 28-item instrument was administered to 30 college students enrolled in a compensatory education program. These students all fit the poverty level income criteria as set forth by the Department of H.E.W. They all come from inner city high schools of a major Eastern city. They are enrolled in the program because their S.A.T. scores and other widely used predictive instruments "preclude their being regular admittees" as set forth by the Special Services to Disadvantaged Students as specified by the Department of H.E.W.

No attempt was made to identify the student other than Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) since the hypothesis is that a positive attitude toward school is a positive attitude toward school whether the possessor of that attitude be Black, White, young, old, male or female--the converse or negative attitude would also be true.

The instrument attempted to assess these attitudes as discussed in S. B. Kahn's, "Affective Correlates of Academic Achievement." (1969)

Attitude toward Professors

Attitude toward Administrators

Attitude toward Peers

Attitude toward Relevance of School (curriculum, scheduling, etc.)

Attitude toward Program Services (guidance, counseling, etc.)

The students' responses were tabulated and a frequency chart designed. The students were separated into 3 categories according to their academic standing. These categories are Low: under - 2.0 G.P.A.; Average: 2.0-2.9 G.P.A.; High: 3.0 - and above G.P.A.

Fig. 1 N = 15 Average above 2.0 G.P.A.

Category	Positive	F	Negative	F	Neutral	F
Professors	33.33%	5	6.66%	1	60.00%	9
Administrators	6.66%	1	53.33%	8	40.00%	6
Peers	46.66%	7	13.33%	2	40.00%	6
School	46.66%	7	13.33%	2	40.00%	6
Services	40.00%	6	20.00%	3	40.00%	6

Fig. 2 N = 7 Low under 2.0 G.P.A.

Category	Positive	F	Negative	F	Neutral	F
Professors	14.28%	1	71.42%	5	14.28%	1
Administrators	14.28%	1	71.42%	5	14.28%	1
Peers	57.14%	4	14.28%	1	28.57%	2
School	28.57%	2	57.15%	4	14.28%	1
Services	28.57%	2	71.42%	5	0.00	0

N = 8 High 3.0 G.P.A.

Category	Positive	F	Negative	F	Neutral	F
Professors	75.00%	6	12.50%	1	12.50%	1
Administrators	62.50%	5	25.00%	2	12.50%	1
Peers	62.50%	5	0.00%	0	37.50%	3
School	87.50%	7	0.00%	0	12.50%	1
Services	75.00%	6	25.00%	2	0.00%	0

The writer is not attempting to establish any kind of causal relationship between the categories and the frequency of response. It would take a more sophisticated study to do that. However, in the light of the literature in the field, there is some reason to suspect that some correlations can be assumed. For this study, the writer used 60% as minimum acceptability for establishing any kind of significance. It is felt that it would take at least a number over 60% to indicate whether a category was of significance.

DISCUSSION

Average - Fig. 1

From the 60% criteria established for significance, only the neutral attitude toward professors seems to be of any significance--and that just slightly. The very low levels of negative attitude toward professors, and positive attitude toward administrators seem to set the tone for this group: apparently their moderate attitude toward all facets of the institution known as school is producing moderate results. Interestingly enough, this group represents the largest of the three groups. The group probably corresponds quite nicely to the greater outside society and says that school has but a moderate effect on most students!

Low - Fig. 2

Even a cursory glance at the negative column would show that this group appears to have a rather negative attitude toward professors, administrators, and services offered by the school. A fact that is extremely interesting since this writer knows from personal experience that those likely to be in this group happen to cut classes more often, avoid the administrators like the plague and are least likely to utilize any of the services offered by the institution. This fact also shows a weakness in the instrument which should have contained some items to measure attendance at classes and tutoring and counseling sessions. However, this writer does not believe that it is really very important to discover the "how" of these negative attitudes, i.e., the

student does not often attend classes, therefore he is never given the subject or the professor a fighting chance at capturing his attention; but the "why", i.e., why does the student feel this way toward professor x when a rather large number of his peers, far larger than this low group, either are neutral toward professor x or actually think that professor x is a great instructor.

Unfortunately, the study is not extensive enough to handle the above issues. The study does, though, seem to indicate that one of the following is true:

A. Students have a negative attitude toward school and therefore did not do well.

or

B. Students do not do well in school and therefore develop a negative attitude.

But, again, that is the chicken or the egg controversy. What does seem to be important is the fact that this group is not happy at school.

High - Fig. 3

A cursory glance at the positive column of this group immediately reveals that this group, in tote, is very positive in its attitudes toward professors, administrators, their peers and the school. It is interesting to note that they are just about as overwhelmingly positive as the low group is negative toward these same variables. This is quite interesting since the school is rather small and most of the students are in the Liberal Arts curriculum and therefore it can be

rather safely concluded that most of the students in the sample have had just about the same exposure to the same people and experiences--with far differing rates of success.

Again, it is not the "how" but the "why" that is the issue that must be resolved. Why is this group happy with their school experience, while an almost identical number of their peers are unhappy with what approximates the same experience. The study does not answer that, but the study does seem to bear out this adage:

One man's meat is another man's poison.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROJECTS IN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

With ever skyrocketing cost for education--and increased taxpayer concern for accountability, i.e., high student G.P.A. and low student attrition, ways must be found to select students with high potentials for academic success. There can be no question but that there are countless numbers of inner city and rural poor folk who are inevitably bypassed by the American educational system. The difficulty lies in identifying these students. This is the question. The standard instruments (C.E.E.B., S.A.T., G.R.E., L.S.A.T., etc.) appear to many to be so culturally biased that they are of no use in predicting academic performance. Lins, Abell, and Hutchins (1966) and many others have found this to be the case.

As the literature stands today, there seem to be but 4 avenues open to resolve this issue:

A. Social Darwinism

B. Middle Class-ification

C. Institutional Change

D. New Admissions Criteria

A. Social Darwinism

Banfield (1968), Jencks (1972), Moynihan (1969) and others seem to all take the "survival of the fittest" attitude. They urge for a "benign neglect" attitude toward the poor because their "radical present-orientedness" makes them unsuitable for school. This writer is totally in agreement with the posture that states that school is

radically future-oriented and that those who are truly "radically present-oriented" do not stand much of a chance at succeeding at school. But, the writer also knows that Watson (1974) is correct when he identifies much of this kind of research as ways of co-opting, and often dictating, public policy when that public no longer wishes to live up to its social and moral responsibilities.

It seems to this writer that the public does have a social and moral responsibility to those who have not been given an equal opportunity. Even Banfield admits that one can "mistake a 'future-oriented' person for that of a 'radically present-oriented' person because of social class." So there are those among the poor who can indeed make it in school; ways just have to be found to find them. Social Darwinism would dictate that those future leaders stay forever lost to themselves and to America.

B. Middle Class-ification

Klingelhofer and Longacre (1972), after an extensive study, have concluded that these compensatory programs can only be made to work by recruiting

1. "Those students with middle class backgrounds"
   or
2. "Those who aspire to middle class ideals"

From what the writer knows about schools (see Institutional Change) and the literature, Klingelhofer and Longacre are probably correct in their hypothesis. But in the case of the former, there is no need to exhaust public funds on those who have already made it to the middle

class; and in the case of the latter, who or what is to determine what are middle class ideals? Is there not a danger, as Yette (1971) warns, that middle class just may be a synonym for white?

Middle class-ification--changing the social class of the student, has a glaring innate flaw in that so many people equate "middle class" with "whiteness." Surely, so much damage has been done to Blacks, as it is, in pursuit of whiteness (Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951, Frazier, 1954, Mosby, 1970) that this alternative is totally unacceptable.

C. Institutional Change

Green (1969), Barnes (1970), Williams (1972) and many, many others take the position that for these programs to work the very foundation of these institutions must undergo a radical change. The writer totally agrees with this position. Surely, if the institution where this study was taken were to change, the Low group probably would succeed. But the questions that go begging are where, when, how and by whom? First the author must state that Farber (1969) is probably correct in that the typical student is a nigger. (The typical student being at least middle class and totally white.) So change is necessary for all students. But from where are institutions going to get these exciting, humanistic instructors? When will these new instructors arrive on the scene? How can these instructors replace the old instructors who have struggled for and are on tenure. (At the institution where the study was made, fully 85% of the faculty are tenured.) And finally, who is going to rid the system of its

entranched flaws?

Before leaving this section, the writer would like to state that the term "Institutional Change" seems to be a contradiction in terms; for if the institution were flexible and capable of change, it never would have become an institution. That being the case, the writer can only see one aspect of institutional change that stands a possible chance for fruition and that is to set new admissions criteria.

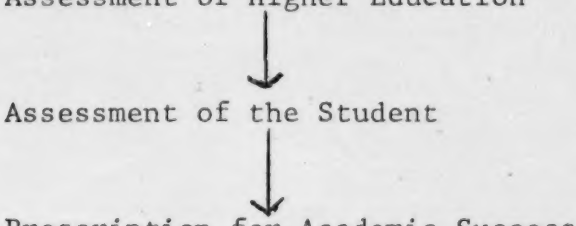
D. New Admissions Criteria

To quote Green (1969), "To increase the relevance of the university and to make higher education available to a larger and more representative portion of our society, what is needed is not a raising or even lowering of standards, but instead the use of <u>different</u> set of standards which take into account motivational and attitudinal characteristics of the individual as well as the usual intellectual factor." The writer could not agree more. Unfortunately, Green leaves the discussion right there. It just so happens that from inception, these projects were administered by folk who talked a great deal about the motivation of students. But talk is about all they did. The recent G.A.O. study on Upward Bound called these projects to task for lack of hard evaluation criteria for assessment of student performance. In short, there is need to get down to some hard research so that instruments for predicting academic success can be developed.

The writer believes that a comparison of fig. 1 with fig. 2 can possibly reveal some interesting data. Note that nearly all students

have virtually the same exposure to faculty and institutional experiences (see pp. 8-9); yet with far differing attitudes and probably, therefore, far different rates of academic success.

The writer joins in with Brown and Holtzman (1953), Kahn (1969), Lefcourt and Ladwig (1965), McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell (1953) and Soares and Soares (1969) in the opinion that certain affective variables are far more important than mere cognitive skills. If that is the case, the writer proposes the following as a possible paradigm for a compensatory education project at the Higher Education level:



It seems to the writer that there are but two important variables in the educational process and they are the institution and the student. An assessment of the institution of higher education would reveal that it is one of the most inflexible, monolithic institutions in the Western world. At first that may seem depressing; but a second glance reveals that since it is unbending, it is a constant variable. That means that it will stand absolutely still, allowing it to be examined for its central tendencies, data collected on it and a prescription formula derived for academic success at it, if that is

what the student desires.

A similar assessment of the student will reveal that he is the one variable that may be subject to change. He is the one who must change if he wants to succeed at the institution. Of course, one does not need to attend an institution of higher education in order to live a good life. Other people at other kinds of institutions must fight to get the poor admitted and concomitantly design programs to keep them performing there at successful levels. One positive thing can be said for higher education and that is at least it has admitted the poor. How to keep them there is another matter.

A part of the student's assessment should include his performance on certain attitudinal scales. Brown (1953) has a scale which purports to assess the student's attitude toward school. Does he like being confined to the classroom? Can he tolerate the "objective, scholarly," mode of teaching? This, of course, is the lecture method so commonly employed throughout the institution. Rokeach (1960) has devised a scale that purports to measure dogmatism. How flexible is the student? How does he react to a novel situation? This is so important because generally higher education is extremely novel to the average poor student. Rotter (1966) has a scale that purports to measure locus of control. Who does the student perceive is the controlling factor in his life? Is he in control or is it chance, luck--or the professor? Does he perceive that he can control, even manipulate the institution if he but manipulates his own behavior?

To this writer the answers to these questions must be in the positive or affirmative. In order for the student to succeed, in the writer's view, he must be a positive, self-actualized person. If he becomes readily frustrated by the novelty of different, alien seeming instructional methods and materials, he will probably fail. If he does not believe that he is indeed in control of his destiny, he will probably fail. In short, if he is stumped by those constants that were revealed in the assessment of higher education, he will probably fail.

To date, no one is absolutely sure of the validity or the reliability of the instrument listed above. But the hypothesis seems to be generated by the literature. To this writer, they deserve a try. After all, what is the alternative...

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